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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Sub-Commission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities
Forty-sixth session
Agenda item 6

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING POLICIES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND SEGREGATION AND OF APARTHEID, IN ALL COUNTRIES, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES: REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMISSION UNDER COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTION 8 (XXIII)

Joint written statement submitted by the International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations, the World Assembly of Youth, the World Federation of Democratic Youth, non-governmental organizations in consultative status (category I), the International Union of Students, International Union of Socialist Youth, World Student Christian Federation, non-governmental organizations in consultative status (category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[28 July 1994]

GE.94-13501 (E)

Campaign for the release of Bushra Abdel-Karim, Secretary General of the Sudanese Youth Union (SYU)

Introduction

1. The military dictatorship which has ruled the Sudan since June 1989 after overthrowing the democratically elected Government continues to commit violations of human rights. The tragic human rights violations over the past five years are almost unprecedented in any other country in the world.

2. The military regime abolished the country's Constitution, dissolved the elected constituent assembly and the Government, banned all political parties, trade unions and youth organizations, censored the press and put under arbitrary detention thousands of politicians, trade union leaders, youth leaders, journalists and human rights activists.

3. In October 1990, Dr. Mamoun Mohammed Hussein, a prominent medical doctor, was sentenced to death for allegedly taking part in arranging a doctors' strike. Only international pressure saved his life after he had been kept in a death cell for several months in solitary confinement.

4. The condemnation of the regime's policies and practices on human rights by different Governments, and regional and international organizations stands witness to this gloomy situation. In March 1993 the Commission on Human Rights appointed Mr. Gaspar Biro Special Rapporteur on the Sudan. In December 1993, on the basis of the preliminary report, the General Assembly of the United Nations condemned the serious violations of human rights in the Sudan by 111 votes to 13.

5. Neglectful of the foregoing, the Government persists with its consistent violations of human rights, dismissing all reports and facts. The consequences are serious in a country which is basically multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multicultural. The war in the South continues in much more grave dimensions for the first time in the history of the Sudan; it is not a political conflict, it is a holy war against non-muslims.

Detention and torture

6. The practice of arresting people and detaining them arbitrarily continues as a normal practice. Since the Government came to power, there have been widespread arbitrary arrests and detention of suspected political opponents. In late May 1994 the security authorities arrested about 10 political leaders, including Mr. Bushra Abdel-Karim and other trade unionists. On 21 June 1994, Mr. El-Sadig al-Mahdi, the ex-Prime Minister was arrested with other members of the leadership of the Umma Party.

7. Large numbers of well documented cases of torture and ill-treatment have been reported by the Special Rapporteur. Torture is particularly widespread in the secret detention centres known as "ghost houses" where suspected political opponents are routinely subjected to torture at the hands of the security forces. In the overwhelming majority of cases, torture is reportedly used immediately after arrest in order to extract confessions. In some cases torture has been applied as a punishment for alleged opposition. In

April 1990, Dr. Ali Fadul, a medical doctor who had been active in the Doctors' Union, died as a result of torture in a secret detention centre in Khartoum. Muhammad A-Rayah, an ex-army officer, complained to the Minister of Justice and Chief Justice how he was brutally beaten, subjected to electric shocks, burned with cigarettes and sexually assaulted by security officers whom he named. However, detainees in Sudan are normally held at the security headquarters or at "ghost houses". They are commonly beaten upon arrival at "ghost houses", tortured and ill-treated. Methods of torture include beatings, burnings, electric shocks on sensitive parts of the body, sexual assault including rape, threats of disappearance and mock executions.

Case of Mr. Bushra Abdel-Karim

8. Bushra Abdel-Karim is 35 years old and married with one daughter. In April 1989 he was elected by the 5th Congress of the Sudanese Youth Union as Secretary General of the Union. During the 1970s when he was a student leader he was arrested several times by the security forces of the dictatorial regime of the then President Nimery because of his opposition to Government policies. In April 1992 he was arrested for two months and then released. Bushra has been a non-violent opponent of the Government sensitizing youth to their rights and freedom of expression. In late May 1994 Bushra was arrested along with other political leaders, without charges. His whereabouts are still unknown. Mr. Bushra is likely to have to undergo intensive interrogation and to be subjected to torture and ill-treatment. He has been arrested solely for exercising his internationally recognized fundamental rights to freedom of expression and association.

General obligation of the Government of the Sudan

9. The obligations under international law which the Sudan is bound to respect are, in the first place, contained in the international instruments to which the Sudan has agreed. As a member of the United Nations, the Sudan is bound by its Charter. It is also obliged to respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons within its territory as set out in the following instruments to which Sudan has become a party: the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The Sudan has signed the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Additionally, the Sudan is also bound to respect the standards of international customary law.

10. We request Mr. Gaspar Biro, Special Rapporteur on the Sudan, the Commission on Human Rights and the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, kindly to take all necessary and appropriate actions for the release of Mr. Bushra Abdel-Karim, the Secretary General of the Sudanese Youth Union.